

# AJAZZ

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**Cover image:**



**Ali Ben Sou Allé and the turkophone.** (See page 4)

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The deadline for contributions to the August edition of AJazz is mid July 2023

Established in 1996

A fully accredited Museum run entirely by volunteers.  
 Home to the largest Australian Jazz Collection.

All items catalogued to Museum standard and stored in archival conditions.

**Patron:** James Morrison AM

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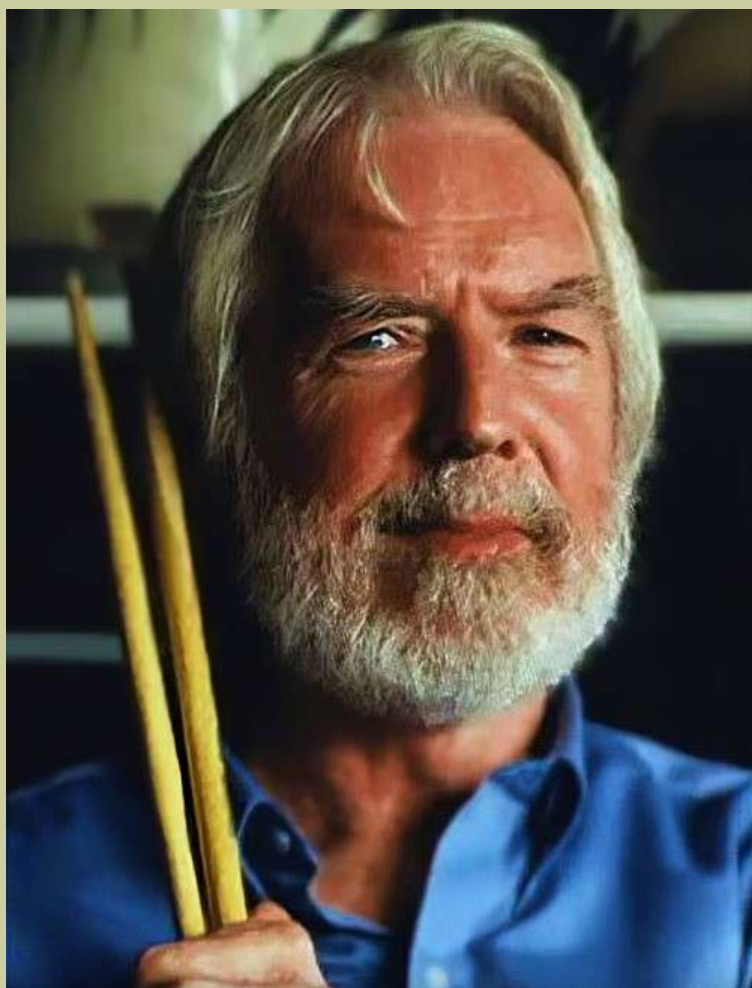
**AJM Jazz Ambassador Paul Grabowsky AO**

## A Giant of Australian Jazz

### The Sinistral Drummer

# John Kenneth Pochée OAM

1940 – 2022



In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Jazz Museum acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, water and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Vale  
**David James Lole**  
Pianist  
1957 – 2023



OUR great mate David Lole took his leave peacefully on 7th of January, surrounded by his loved ones. His passing followed a short illness culminating in a massive heart attack.

Dave was a fine player, a man dedicated to his family, his parents, his fishing and to jazz and jazz musicians. His sense of humour, meaningful friendship, wonderful cooking, writing, wine expertise and care for people were legendary.

Hailing from Canberra, Dave had played piano since childhood, but in relatively recent years had turned his talents to jazz bands and jazz piano. Joining up with Reg Packer, Bill Beasley and the boys from the "Double A Jazz Band", he practised hard and long to become a versatile player in most jazz genres.

Known to, and loved by many in the jazz fraternity, in the past year Dave offered his efforts as a committee member of our Victorian Jazz Club, a welcome addition. Since moving to Melbourne four or five years ago, he became a respected bandleader in his own right, with "The David Lole Syncopaths" touring both Victoria and Interstate. He was also a true and valued friend.

Our sympathy and love goes out to parents Norma and Jim, both Jazz players who sent him on his way to our music.

To his family - daughters Rachel and Katherine (Kitty) and to his loving partner, Brenda, we send our sincere condolences.

*Peter McKay*

## Collections Manager Report

**N**ow that COVID 19 is behind us, it is timely that I provide an update on the AJM Collection housed at Wantirna. We are slowly returning to normal activities after being shutdown by COVID. The group of jazz enthusiasts, who met and voted to form the Victorian Jazz Archive in 1996, could not have dreamed their efforts would grow into the Australian Jazz Museum of today. Their aim was to provide a permanent home for jazz donations to be housed for future generations to enjoy. Over 1300 people have donated items to the AJM since inception. Large and small collections from jazz collectors, musicians, and their families have provided items to what is today the largest collection of Australian Jazz in the world. In addition to our original building we have 4 additional shipping containers to house the growing collection.

Our largest recent donation was the collection of Jack Mitchell, the doyen of jazz discography, who died in 2021. His daughter, Penny, drove a truck down from Lithgow NSW with 65 boxes packed with treasures Jack had collected over a lifetime. Of special note was 51 scrapbooks dating from 1940s through to present times — a treasure-trove of articles and jazz items. His collection of Australian 78 rpm records has rare labels from the 1940s that have not been seen before by our jazz restorer Ken Simpson-Bull OAM. Another special donation was from the daughter of Bob Barnard. Loretta personally delivered a box containing treasures from Bob including many jazz award trophies and photographs.

AJM received a grant from the Public Record Office of Victoria to make a series of video interviews of jazz musicians resident in Victoria. So far we have recorded videos with Harry Price, Kenn Jones, Bob Sedergreen and Ross Anderson. Over the next year we hope to complete many more interviews which will eventually be available online. It is important we capture the stories of jazz musicians who played such a big role in the jazz scene over many decades.

I have been actively adding to the collection many examples of contemporary jazz. There is a thriving jazz scene full of talented younger musicians who deserve to take a place along the jazz masters of old. A challenge is how to archive music that has no physical form, as so much music is download only. I have found reaching out when record reviews are posted brings good results with CDs donated.

It has been my honour to be Collections Manager since 2007 and the support from the jazz community has been overwhelming. 99% of the items in AJM have been donated. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who make it all happen. It is a huge task sorting, archiving, data entry and digitising music and photographs.

AJM continues to grow and has an important future, which requires support by jazz lovers, government and foundations.

*Mel Blachford OAM*



# The Storied Australian Saxophone

## by Ross Chapman



*Ali Ben Sou Allé performed on the turkophone*

**W**hether through its instantly identifiable sound, or merely on account of its evocative image, the saxophone has long embodied a spirit of freedom and self-expression that is so readily associated with jazz. In fact, as a 1924 article syndicated in Sydney's *World's News* put it, the two were practically synonymous:

*An earnest appeal to Americans to cease murdering the English language was made by a teacher in self-expression at the Rotary Club of New York recently. The professor described the language spoken in New York as 'saxophone English', which was to pure English as taught at Oxford what jazz is to classical music. The hurried existence of Americans, he declared, causes them to express themselves in toots, squawks, and nasal tones, even their hands, feet, bodies, and eyes being used. When a person remarks 'Waja say?', 'Whacha got?' and calls a bird a 'boid', it's about time something was done to save the language, he said, or people living 200 years hence won't recognise words on the phonograph records of our period.*

A tone of concern, and allusions to the strange and exotic, are also pertinent if we were to delve further back into the historical record: from the glitz of the 1920s to the gold of the 1850s. In fact, given jazz's American origins and its close relationship with the saxophone, it may be surprising to learn that the saxophone appeared in Australia *before* it debuted in the United States. This remarkable episode in Australian musical history is scarcely known, yet it offers a range of insights to Australian musical life, and even

parallels to the Australian Jazz Age that would eventually follow.

### *The saxophone appeared in Australia before it debuted in the United States*

Records indicate that the saxophone was publicly performed at Melbourne's Mechanics Institute (today's Athenaeum Theatre, on Collins Street) in June 1853, fully six months before it was first heard in New York's Castle Garden. However, it came in a different guise to one we would recognise today: Melbourne audiences braved inclement winter weather to attend a well-publicised 'grand concert', where a French performer by the stage name of Ali Ben Sou Allé closed the first act with two popular songs on the 'turkophone'. The *Argus* newspaper later reported:

*[Sou Allé's] performance upon the new instrument, the turkophone, was extremely successful; and he was vehemently encored no fewer than three times, each time returning with a different instrument; to the intense amusement of the audience. These instruments dwindled gradually away till the last was a mere squeaking pipe, with a sound precisely resembling the bagpipe; and a few bagpipe tunes (if there be such things) were blown through very successfully, and with a great deal of humor. [...] The experiment on the whole was very successful, and will, we have no doubt, lead to another exhibition of those fine new instruments before long.*

Such encores would be a feature of Sou Allé's long Australian sojourn, for he was a remarkably skilled musician. He had arrived in Geelong on Christmas Eve in 1852, spent months on the goldfields seeking his fortune and perhaps playing for new audiences, before embarking on a series of performances across the colonies of Victoria, New South Wales, and Van Diemen's Land through to 1855. No matter the location, audiences were dazzled by Sou Allé's novel instrument and his commendable musicality. As a Geelong reporter reflected, the resulting attention and regard was thoroughly well-deserved:

*We can appreciate a good thing, and without making any pretensions to talents or criticism on the Divine Art, fully accord to his Highness Ali-Ben-Sou-Alle the celebrity he has attained. His performance is as extraordinary as the shape of the instruments he makes discourse such exquisite music.*

In a time before jazz and mass media, where reference points for readers were much more limited than they would later become, newspaper articles of the day were florid in their description of the saxophone's sound. It was painted as 'rich, full, sonorous, and streaming out with liquid beauty' in one report; elsewhere, a correspondent noted that its tone spanned 'the rich breadth of the sax-horn of the fullest timbre to the tenderest note of the clarionet.' It was nothing if not versatile.

A further musical comment can be made on account of Sou Allé's improvisations, which were key features of his performances and offered the opportunity to display his virtuosic dexterity. As with many other popular performers of his day, Sou Allé performed well-known melodies and then followed them with elaborate

variations on these themes. The extent to which these were extemporised, rather than prepared prior, is difficult to ascertain (in *Playing Ad Lib: Improvisatory Music in Australia 1836-1970* John Whiteoak describes 'presumably improvised fantasias', and notes that Sou Allé was 'almost a mid-nineteenth-century counterpart of later visiting star American jazz saxophonists'). In any case, written versions of these improvisations were later gathered, published, and presented to the Prince of Wales. This Royal Album, containing some 18 pieces including the *Souvenirs d'Australie et de Manille*, is today part of the British Library's collection.

What impact did the 'turkophone' label have on Australian audiences? At first glance it is puzzling, as for largely British-born audiences of the time exotic musical acts of the time were sources of light entertainment and often derision. The minstrel show's pejorative representations of African American slaves had developed in the United States in the 1830s but were performed across Britain as well, and Australians had even applied the format to depict indigenous people in the pre-goldrush years. The harrowing experiences of some Chinese miners on Australian goldfields also speaks to a hostility on the part of a society who saw 'eastern' cultures and races as naturally inferior to their own, or otherwise a threat in need of containment (a thread expanded upon in Edward Said's influential *Orientalism* of 1978). Was it just on account of the music that Australian audiences embraced Sou Allé and his saxophone?

Beyond his musicianship and novel appeal, an answer lies in cultural dynamics of the Crimean War of 1853-1856. This conflict pitted a growing Russian Empire against the combined forces of the British, French, and Ottoman Empires. This encounter was of almost existential interest to Australians, who were fearful of a Russian invasion of their young, rich, and vulnerable colonies and, while not participating directly in the war, raised considerable funds for the cause.

This sentiment was perhaps most vividly expressed in a June 1854 article in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*, when it was reported that a 'Russian fleet is now in the Pacific Ocean, with no pacific intention towards the Felician Land'. The article outlines how locals might arm and conduct themselves to see off the potential Russian hordes, in twelve clear steps and perhaps not entirely in jest. The tenth item reads:

*That the services of a foreign ally being desirable and the employment of the same consistent with the custom of nations, it shall be lawful for the said burghers to enter into alliance with Ali-Ben-Sou-Allé, and the better to achieve the downfall of the said hordes, he, the said Ali-Ben-Sou-Allé, shall, if he object not therein, advance before the said burghers' beat, playing the Turkophone, or Turkophant, or any other phone or phant, save the sychophant, so hereby the souls of the burghers may be in arms and eager for the fray.*

A saxophonist leading the putative defence of Australia, as an expression of freedom against Russian dominion? It is a remarkable image, even if circumstances never quite brought it to bear.

Despite some 65 years between Sou Allé's debut and the commencement of the Australian Jazz Age in July 1918, there are fascinating parallels between these two periods as far as the saxophone is concerned. Underscoring both was a commercial buzz, spurred by the gold rush and 'roaring 20s' respectively, in which the saxophone stood not as an object of 'divine art' but as a

means of sharing music for the people. That is not to say it lacked elegance and sophistication: Sou Allé's virtuosity speaks not to the clamour and noise of the vaudeville stage, but instead to the more refined artistry of touring saxophonists (such as Bert Ralton) during the second stanza of the Australian Jazz Age (1923-1928), and the many local and imported musicians of the Swing era who followed.



Above all else, however, is the appeal and impact of exoticism that meant something quite different to what a contemporary observer might instinctively conclude.



The Australian Jazz Age saw its own cast of musicians with orientalist stylings – bandleader and drummer Joe Aronson dubbed himself the 'Rajah of Jazz' with an outfit and stage persona to suit, and in 1927 "14 Oriental Stars and the Chinese Jazz Band" toured Australia over a six-month period (Aline Scott-Maxwell has written fascinating articles on oriental exoticism in the 1920s) – but on account of geopolitical forces, Sou Allé's saxophone had a deeper resonance for his audiences. He was both an exotic other to his audiences, but also a friend – his act succeeded in satisfying the changing conditions a largely white Australia set on outsiders for acceptance. As the saxophonist in Sonny Clay's *Colored Idea* would discover in the tawdry 1928 episode covered in Deirdre O'Connell's *Harlem Nights: The Secret History of Australia's Jazz Age* (Melbourne University Press, 2021), it was a bar that not every touring saxophonist would be able to clear.

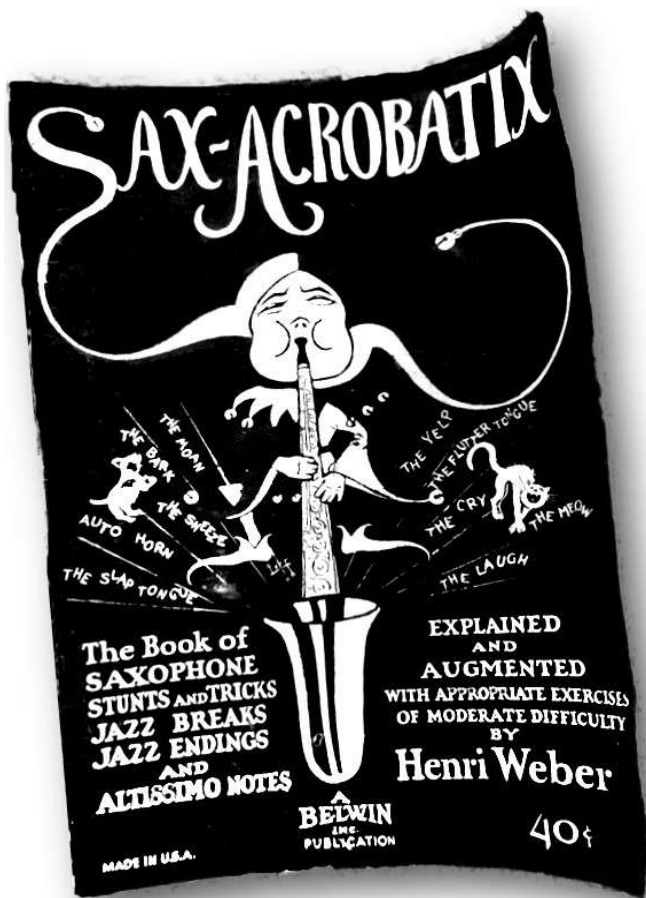
From this broader historical perspective, it may well be possible to separate the saxophone from jazz – but only to a degree. As the well-worn adage reminds us, the more things change. ■

**About the author:**

Ross Chapman is a saxophonist, music educator, and music researcher currently completing the Doctor of Philosophy (Fine Arts and Music) at the University of Melbourne. His research centres on the history of the saxophone in Australia, from its gold rush-era debut to the multitude of identities it could claim by the onset of the Second World War, and spans a fascinating array of musical styles and performance contexts.

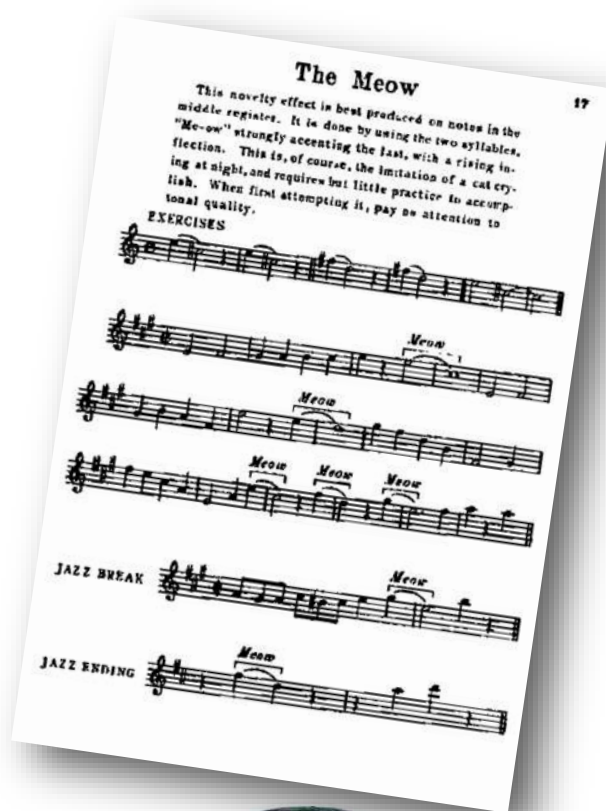


# Bouquets and Brickbats



In 1926 Henri Weber published *Sax Acrobatix: The Book of Saxophone Stunts and Tricks, Jazz Breaks, Jazz Endings and Altissimo Notes* highlighting the versatility of the instrument.

Weber explained how, with a little perseverance, the player could produce a range of sounds including *The Meow, The Sneeze, The Cry, The Laugh, The Yelp, The Bark, The Moan, Auto Horn and The Roar*.



However, there was not universal approbation for these unique qualities as evidenced by an earlier article in the *Sydney Sun* of June 14th, 1924.

According to the writer the saxophone's "popularity is due to the fact that its note is the nearest approximation to the human voice."

High praise indeed. But he then continues in a much less complimentary manner.

"Another deplorable fact is that the saxophone can imitate the noise of anything on earth and even the nether regions.

"That wail that ravages the ears of jazzers could have come only from a lost soul being methodically tortured in Hades.

"The saxophones can yell, howl, squeak, bark, sneeze, crow, gabble, cackle, clack, cry, roar, sob, bellow, screech, squawk, laugh, whine, yap, blare, guffaw, bay, growl, snarl, grunt, purr, neigh, caw, bray, bleat, low, sigh, quack, chuckle, chirp, chirrup, twitter, moan, hum, buzz, mew, coo and moo.

"The greatest problem of the saxophone is why, in a civilized community, anyone is allowed to learn how to play it." ■

... Ralph Powell



*Sax-o-phun : Laughing Saxophone by Rudy Wiedoeft - A 1924 recording which displays the versatility of the saxophone*

# PETER MAURICE HICKS

1936 – 2022

By Frank Chatterton

**P**eter Hicks was a remarkable bloke! He was one of those few interesting people who made a major contribution to Australian jazz, even though they did not play an instrument. Peter was a supreme organiser who knew everyone and would certainly be the most influential non-musician in Tasmanian jazz history.



*Peter Hicks  
A supreme organiser*

Always keen on traditional jazz, he became particularly interested in the music of the New Orleans revival after he and a small group of friends sponsored the Melbourne New Orleans Jazz band on a trip to Hobart in the early sixties. This led to the founding of the Hobart Jazz Club, with Peter as Secretary, but it was an informal group led by Peter which, over the years, arranged visits by mainland groups to Hobart. This started as a pretty informal arrangement where Peter would find enough work to cover expenses, the band members were billeted with Peter's friends, no one got paid and the whole weekend became a big jazz party. It quite often resulted in a small loss, which was borne by Peter and his friends. Bands involved included some quite famous groups such as the Yarra Yarra NOJB, The Red Onions, the Storyville Jazzmen, New Harlem and Geoff Bull. They all visited on several occasions.

Over the years Peter arranged about 30 visits and his address book was a mine of contacts of the who's who of Australian traditional jazz. He was particularly friendly with Allan Leake, Geoff Bull and Bob Barnard. Peter attended his first convention, the 18<sup>th</sup> at Kew in 1963. This led to a great desire to have another Convention in Tasmania (the first was the 8<sup>th</sup> in 1953) and this happened as the 22<sup>nd</sup> in 1967, with Peter as Secretary. It is still regarded as one of the great small Conventions. This was repeated as the 26<sup>th</sup> in 1971.

Peter was also the driving force (Secretary again) behind the 32<sup>nd</sup> Convention in 1977. The 70s were the height of Conventions having a guest artist. Peter had become friendly with American reed player Kenny Davern during a commercial visit to Hobart a year earlier and he arranged for him to be the guest. Kenny said that he wasn't interested in doing a 'Soprano Summit'. Peter just nodded and put him on with The Paul Furniss Quartet anyway, and the result was stunning. The recording of their first set is still one of the highlights of Convention recorded history.

By the 90s Hobart's popularity as a tourist hotspot made it impossible to find enough accommodation to run a Convention, so Peter undertook the challenge of running one in Launceston (in 1990 the 45<sup>th</sup>). Imagine doing that in a city 200 kilometres from home, with an enthusiastic group of locals who barely knew what a Convention was!! Peter's friendship with people like Geoff Bull and Peter Gaudion resulted in Geoff's group as well as the Syncopators attending. The Convention was so successful that it was repeated in 1997 (the 52<sup>nd</sup>).

Peter was a great administrator. He was Secretary of the Jazz Action Society of Tasmania when there was Arts Council money available for jazz music events (regrettably long ago now) and he was involved in bringing a stream of visiting artists to perform here. Names such as Ralph Sutton (several times), Dave McKenna, Scott Hamilton, Jay McShann and Alton Purnell (with Geoff Bull) spring to mind.

Peter travelled overseas to festivals such as Ascona and Edinburgh where he resumed acquaintance with artists such as Kenny Davern, as well as Sammy Rimington and Topsy Chapman with whom he had undertaken a tour of SE Australia with Geoff Bull's group (Peter acting as an enthusiastic roadie!)

Until his health started to fail Peter attended many Conventions. He also contributed to the Convention as a Trustee for some years and as a member of the Steering Committee. He was a Life member of the Hobart Jazz Club.

Peter's health finally failed him, and he left us in August 2022. Vale Peter ■





# ABE ROMAIN

## A Legendary Figure

By Ken Simpson-Bull OAM

**Almost forgotten today, there is a great deal to be recalled about all-round musician and bandleader the late Abe Romain. During his career he played music and led bands throughout the roaring twenties' jazz age, the swing era, and big-band modernity as well as performing internationally with the world's leading dance bands.**

**A**be Romain's proper full name, which he stated in an interview with Kate Dunbar in 1993, was Adrian August de Bussy de Saint Romain. He didn't say how Adrian became "Abe", but another source asserts that he thought that Adrian sounded too effeminate. Why his shortened surname was spelled Romaine (with an e) in most printed references during the 1920s and '30s is probably due to journalistic errors.

Abe, whose father was French, was born in Wellington New Zealand on the 27th of August 1905. He initially studied violin and began occasionally playing with a local Wellington dance band. His first major job was with the band of Charlie Dorkin performing up and down the New Zealand coasts. He also played violin in the pit orchestras of several stage shows.



*Abe at age 19 in 1924.*

At around the age of 15 he obtained a job as musician and cabin boy on the cruise ship "Tahiti", that travelled from Wellington to Sydney via San Francisco. After two trips he decided to stay in Sydney where he promptly joined the Musicians Union.

He soon found work which saw him regularly playing, now saxophone and clarinet (which he had also studied in New Zealand) and occasionally trumpet and violin, with Cec Morrison's Gloom Chasers and later with the Merv Lyons

band. Australia thereafter became his adoptive country.

One of Abe's first prestigious jobs was at Sydney's illustrious Ambassador's Ballroom. He was with the first Australian band to perform there following the departure of the imported English band, the Savoy Havana, led by Bert Ralton. It was at the Ambassador's, in 1925, that he met a girl who, after a three-week romance, became his wife for life. And it was with members of Al Hammett's Ambassador's Orchestra that Abe made his first gramophone record in 1926 playing alto sax.

In 1929 he made another recording, this time with the Jazz Artists, and in the same year began the first of several recordings accompanying Des Tooley (known as the lady baritone) on clarinet and alto sax. By this time he was playing (and singing) at Romano's, a classy restaurant with dancing, that had been established by the former head waiter from the Ambassador's. It was



*With Louis Armstrong and Jack Hylton.*

from here he decided, in February 1930, to go to England to extend his experience.

After a few odd gigs in London, Abe obtained a four-month stint with the Herman Darewski band in Blackpool.



*Leading the band at the Palais Royal in 1935.*





*With Wally Norman, Barbara James, Reg Robinson & Billy Miller at the Trocadero 1940.*

He participated in some Parlophone recording sessions with Darewski. Back in London he joined a musicians' soccer team which included band leader Lew Stone. Then Abe cracked it for a position with the famous Jack Hylton band, at that time a group of 22 seasoned musicians. The pace was pretty hectic with up to 29 shows in 30 days touring England and the continent. They played multiple times in Paris and Berlin and toured Switzerland, Hungary and Holland. In Germany, Abe said, "the band was a

to support he found that he couldn't afford to accept the wage-cut and so decided to return to Australia.

Back home he worked with several bands around Sydney followed by a short spell at Melbourne's Green Mill with the Millodians, and another short spell at Brisbane's Trocadero under Roy Baird. He led his own band at Sydney's Ginger Jar in 1935 and also led a band at the Bondi Esplanade.

After a sixteen-weeks' spell of standing-in for American Bandleader Sonny Brooks at Sydney's Palais Royal, in May 1936 Abe decided to go back to London. With his wife and son he sailed on the "Mongolia" which was carrying Australia's Olympic team to the games in Berlin. Once again he was lucky (or skilled) enough to obtain a position with another of Britain's top bands, Harry Roy's, a stint that lasted four years.

The Harry Roy band recorded prolifically and, on some sessions, Abe performed as a vocalist. The Roy band also had a popular radio program, toured all over England, and had a regular spot at London's flash Mayfair Hotel. "There were queues a mile long to get into his shows", Abe said. During his tenure, the band made an extensive tour of South America from which they brought back a tune which became a hit, "El Rancho Grande".

Soon after the declaration of war with Germany Abe decided to return to Australia, much to Harry Roy's disappointment. The boat trip home in 1940 entailed some danger with German U-boats roaming the seas.

On his return Abe had a short stint at Rose's restaurant but soon obtained the job of leading the band at Sydney's Trocadero for six years. Reg Lewis and Barbara James were there with him for a while and several recordings of the band as well as

radio broadcasts were made during this period. Abe often used a theme song, composed by himself, "Blues in the Basement", later changed to "Melancholy Lullaby".

In 1946 Abe decided to take a holiday in America so he headed for Hollywood. On the ship with him were Gladys Moncrieff and a young man heading for international stardom, Ron Randall. The three of them would have a regular afternoon drink with the captain in his cabin. While in America Abe was able to meet Bob Crosby, Ray Noble, Bill Harty, Red Nichols, and former band leader from the 1920s Ray Miller. Unfortunately, American union rules prohibited Abe from working there.

On his return to Australia in January 1947 Abe worked as a disc jockey at 2GB until the beginning of 1948 when he was appointed musical director of the State Theatre Orchestras, alternating between Sydney and Melbourne. In those days major city cinemas featured a musical performance before main screenings. This job lasted until 1951 after which



*With Bandleader Harry Roy on board the ship to South America in 1938.*

riot". They also made a large number of recordings for HMV.

Back in London Abe participated in the very first transatlantic radio transmission of a dance band to America. In 1932, a second tour of the continent included Monte Carlo, Italy, Belgium and France. In early 1933, due to economic circumstances, the band was forced to accept a drop in the wages of its musicians. Because Abe had a wife and a six-year-old son



he led several small bands in Sydney. In 1954, after having worked part-time with Jack Davey for several years, he was appointed musical director of the Jack Davey Show on radio station 2GB. In 1960 he obtained the position of Programme Manager for 2GB.

Abe continued to remain active with occasional casual gigs and radio work until long after retirement age. He had been 12-years-old when the world's first jazz record was released and played music and led bands for the next seven decades. With such a remarkable career he can truly be called a legendary figure. Abe died in Sydney on 21 August 1994, just short of his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday. ■

**Major sources:** An interview with Kate Dunbar – 1993. Abe Romaine Scrapbook – Australian Jazz Museum Archives.

# The Nascence of the Port Jackson Jazz Band

By Ray Feeney

**P**laying the piano was Alfred Feeney's main delight over the years and it is sad that in his later years he is unable to play much due to painful arthritis in his fingers. At the age of seventeen he started learning to play on an old piano that was in Nanna Clancy's house. The piano was eventually given to Alfred, and he used it until he bought his own piano in the early 1950s and he still has the same piano to this day. The only musical influence in the house at that time was from my father who was self-taught and played the mouth organ, mandolin and accordion.

Alfred did at one stage enrol at the Conservatorium of Music where he learnt piano for a few years. Alfred was also the original pianist in the early development stage of the Port Jackson Jazz Band, and he tells of its beginnings in a garage at Rockdale. The players were all members of the Sydney Swing Club, a record club that met in Rowe Street, Sydney at the Blue Tea Rooms, where they listened to jazz records imported into the country by one of the members, Ron Wills, who was also a purser on an ocean liner that travelled regularly between Sydney and the U.S.A.

As a result, he was one of twenty members who were the first in Australia to hear "In The Mood" by Glenn Miller. Some of the members were instrument players, and under the leadership of Jack Parkes, trombonist, were experimenting with a jazz combo. The pianist lost interest and pulled out, and Alfred stepped into the spot. They decided to meet in one member's garage in Rockdale, to have a jam session, and the band was formed from this humble beginning.

The band sounded all right so they performed occasionally at a Sydney surf club. They then started to talk about the future of the band, and someone mentioned the possibility of playing on the ferries between Circular Quay and Manly. Because of this idea someone suggested that they could call themselves the "Port Jackson Jazz Band" and the famous name was born.



Early members included Jack Parkes, trombone (leader), Ken Flannery, trumpet, Duke Farrell, bass, Jack Petty, clarinet, Alfred Feeney, piano, and a drummer and banjo player whose names were not recalled.



## The 1944 Port Jackson Jazz Band

*Jack Petty (clarinet), Jack Parkes (trombone), John Sweeney (bass), Ken Flannery (trumpet), Alfred Feeney (piano), Mal Cooper (drums)*

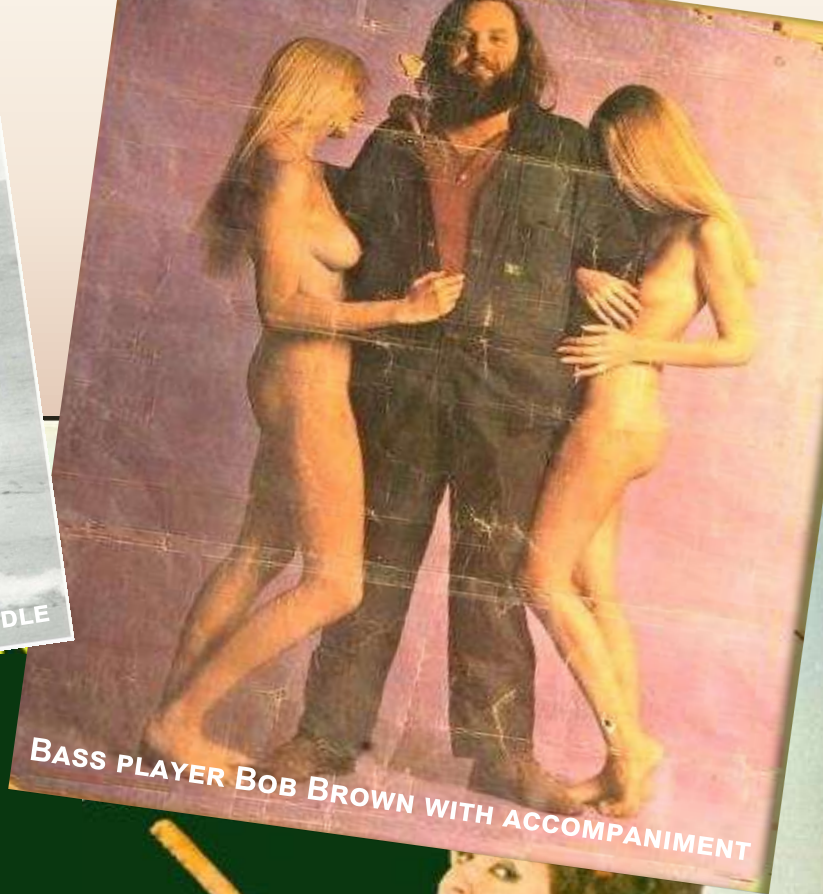
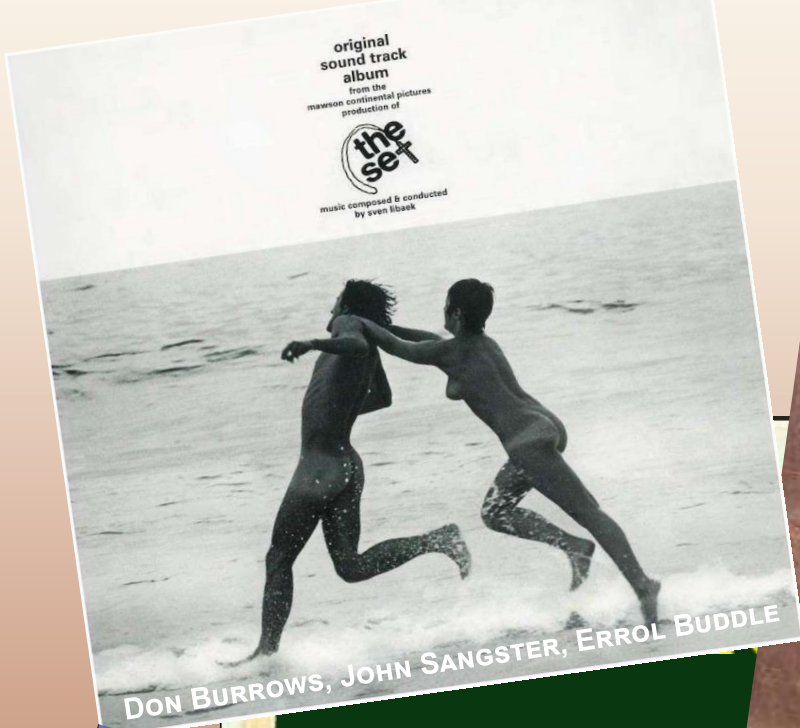


The band went into the Chas. E. Blanks Pty Ltd studio in Castlereagh Street, to record and on the "A" side of the first one they cut "Tin Roof Blues", and on the "A" side of the second, "Dipper Mouth Blues". They also recorded "Guzzlin' Blues" and the "Darktown Strutters' Ball" on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1945. ■



# They Wouldn't Do This Today

When cheesecake was used to promote Jazz



## AUSTRALIAN JAZZ QUINTET



DALY WILSON BIG BAND  
FLAUNT THEIR TALENT ON THE  
1974 CLEO CENTREFOLD





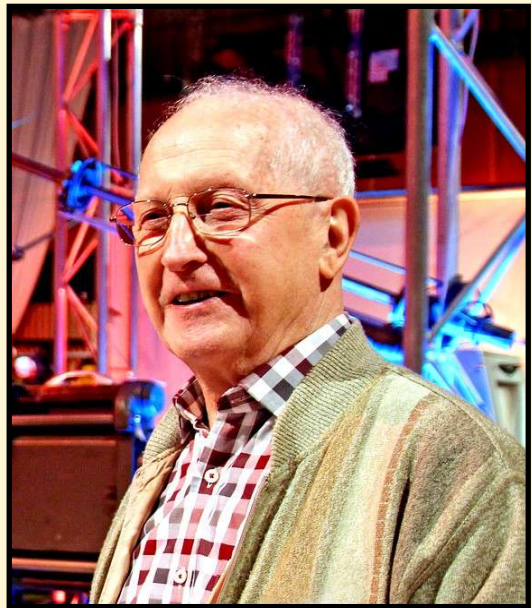
# Ken Simpson-Bull OAM

The Order of Australia Medal  
For service to jazz music preservation.

Ken, who received an OAM in this year's Australia Day Honours list, has been a volunteer at the Australian Jazz Museum for 13 years. During that time he has saved many hundreds of hours of vintage jazz from the oblivion of disintegrating acetate discs and reel to reel tapes.

He has produced over 40 AJM CDs of vintage restored jazz music and has interviewed and recorded a number of jazz personalities.

Ken also writes a regular feature "News from the Australian Jazz Museum" for the "Studfield Wantirna Community News" (a bi-monthly suburban newspaper), and is a regular contributor to the Jazz Museum's quarterly magazine AJazz.



## A Matchless Performance

By Ken Farmer

**M**y wife Chris has asked me to record a story I've told her; one of many arising from a long history of playing in bands of various styles for various social functions.

This gig was one of many of its type, a Dick Frankel jazz band on a Saturday night at an RSL or similar hall in an Adelaide suburb. It must have been for a special occasion of some sort because there was on the bill, as well as the musical entertainment, a ventriloquist.

He, about 50 hard years on him, arrived during our first set and, during the break, told us that he had almost cancelled the gig because of some mishap or tragedy, now lost by me in the mists of time but described by him in great detail; a sickness, fire, accident of some sort.

His point, repeated several times, was that the show must go on, that's showbiz, it was what a real trouper would do and what he would expect from others.

He also asked if I would assist his act by appropriate drum rolls and

effects to punctuate high points in it, and also to come to the front and light the cigarette which his dummy would smoke at the climax of the act.

*And indeed, it was the act's climax*

For most of the act he would have won a competition for the world's worst ventriloquist; his lips, contrary to ventriloquism lore, were never less than highly mobile. I don't know what the audience made of it but I could hardly believe it could get any worse, though he obviously thought it was going extremely well.

Eventually he brought me front and centre with him and informed the audience that he and Jerry would perform their Grand Finale. After the palaver ('Got a fag, mate?' 'Certainly, Jerry'; To me - 'Got a light, mate?' 'Coming up' - and so forth) the cigarette was inserted into Jerry, and I lit the match and positioned it at the tip of the cigarette.

The match was burning down steadily but there was no smoke yet; the ventriloquist's left hand was fumbling about inside Jerry and its owner was becoming visibly agitated. Then he spoke an urgent aside to me – for the first time that night, without moving his lips! "Christ! S..t! Keep the bloody match going, I can't find the bellows." ■



Star of the show Gerry Gee





# This Is Jazz

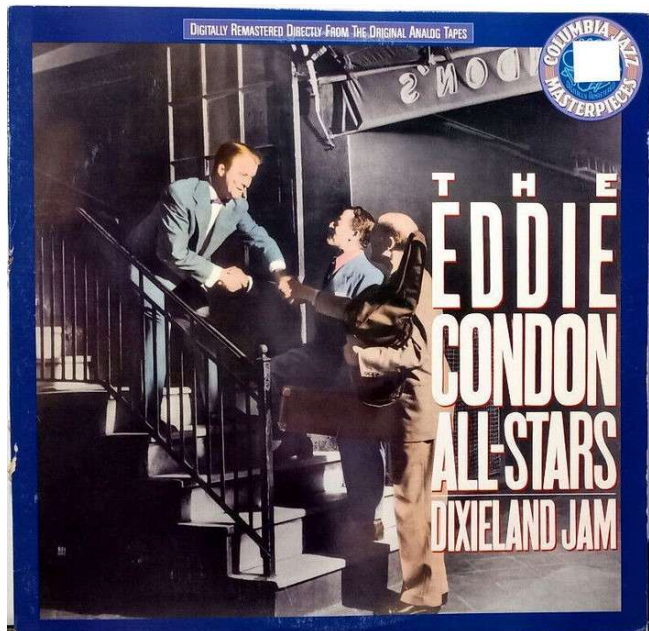
By Bill Brown

## From time to time the question is asked in jazz circles, “What Is Jazz?”

Various answers emerge usually based on the personal choice or taste of person or persons providing an answer. I'm fortunate that, apart from the way out stuff that emerged in the seventies, I can listen to a wide field of the music produced since the twenties when the **Good Noise** first came on to the scene.

Recently I came upon three CDs which appealed to my taste and got my feet tapping. Firstly the “Bob Crosby Big Band” and the smaller group called the “Bob Cats”. This aggregation flourished in the thirties /forties period when the big swing bands were popular dominating what was termed the Swing Era.

However, the Crosby crew kept the Chicago Dixieland form of jazz alive. They had some fine soloists in their ranks. Yank Lawson, trumpet; Matty Matlock, Irving Fazola, clarinets; with a fine rhythm section of Bob Zurky or Jess Stacy, piano; Nappy Lamare, guitar; Bob Haggart, bass; Ray Bauduc, drums. Bob Crosby fronted the band and took the odd vocal. I never rated his singing much. Nothing like brother Bing.



The next CD is the “Eddie Condon All-Stars Dixieland Jam” from the mid fifties. Eddie strums on his guitar and encourages the musicians verbally. They comprise the usual suspects that frequented Condon’s club sessions Wild Bill Davison trumpet; Vic Dickenson trombone; Bob Wilber clarinet; Gene Schroeder piano; George Wettling drums. Great hot music.



The third CD that took my fancy was called “Swing Out” and comprises twelve tracks by a cross section of names. There are three tracks of a group led by trumpet/vocalist Louis Prima, two tracks by a Gene Krupa group, two by the Count Basie band - one with vocalist Jimmy Rushing - two Fats Waller items, two by the King of Swing Benny Goodman and his orchestra. One track was a band led by trumpet man Bunny Berigan. All of this CD was recorded in the thirties. So, in my estimation, all three CDs represent what I term jazz.

I suppose that Duke Ellington tune sums it up. “It Don’t Mean A Thing If It Ain’t Got That Swing”.

Keep Swinging ■

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# POETRY AND JAZZ

AN ARTICLE BY ADRIAN RAWLINS



*Poetry and Jazz with Paul Martin cl, poetry reader Adrian Rawlins and Mookie Herrmann sb*

**H**orst Liepolt asked Adrian Rawlins to put together a poetry and jazz component for his Jazz Centre 44 in St Kilda. So, on October 5, 1960, Poetry & Jazz began on a weekly basis and was to continue until August 1961. Bob Cumming and Adrian were the readers, the music was provided by the "Mookie Hermann All Stars".

The artistic success of the venture was due almost entirely to the unique personality of the late Wolfgang 'Mookie' Hermann, a German poet, essayist, short story writer and bass player who had been 'discovered' in Germany in 1956 by the Ken Colyer band and 'smuggled' back to England. After only three months as bassist with this leading jazz band, Mookie

(without informing his new buddies) migrated to Australia, 'assisted' by the Australian government and contracted to the Victorian Railways for two years.

(One must say that in Germany Mookie earned a real income as a 'gigging' musician: playing in symphony orchestras, restaurants, night clubs, dance or jazz bands, whatever was going, and augmented this uncertain and inconsistent income wherever he was by selling poems, essays, short stories and critical and discursive writing on the arts to regional and national newspapers and periodicals. This was not possible in England, where Mookie had only his earnings from music.

Hence his move to Australia.

On arrival, he was sent to work on the line near Wangaratta. He hated

the work and the company, and after two weeks absconded to Melbourne, where he discovered a flourishing jazz underground. He approached Nick Polites, leader of the Melbourne New Orleans Jazz Band, who was sceptical and allowed him to sit-in in a most complex number. He soon convinced everyone of his bona fides and joined the group, adding a very pronounced 'something' to its sound and style.

I met him in 1959 and soon became a regular visitor to the communal house he shared with a number of the young bachelor members of the band in Kensington (then a nondescript suburb). We listened to jazz records, both ancient and modern, and to records of black church music, Indian (Hindustani) music



and as much real folk music as we could.

Mookie often spoke of life in Germany, and offered his own translations of the surrealist poems of Christian Morgenstern — translations which often included long and detailed expositions of the meanings to be inferred from the words the poet invented to create his particular world-view. These translations were funnier, more brilliant and more profoundly meaningful than any published translations, and I'm sure they did the poet's intentions more justice than the usual versions.

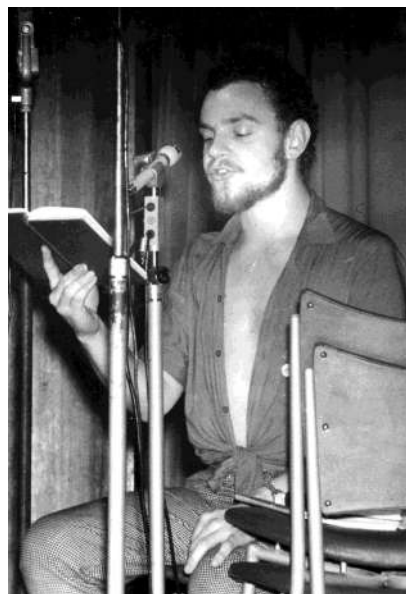
At that time the Melbourne jazz world was bitterly divided into "mouldy-fygges" (i.e. figs in pseudo-antique style) - lovers of the music as it originated in New Orleans in 1891 - and "moderns", inspired by the music which began with Charlie Christian in about 1942, and is best known in the work of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus and many others.

Mookie was as conversant with the productions of mainstream and early modern jazz as he was with the New Orleans purism he knew at first hand from the bands of George Lewis and Ken Colyer and that he was (sometimes with reluctance) maintaining in the Melbourne New Orleans band.

When he was offered the opportunity of leading a band for Poetry & Jazz, he accepted the

challenge with alacrity as it gave him the opportunity of using the whole spectrum of his musical knowledge.

At this point it seems pertinent to make another digression to explain that the jazz scene in Melbourne at this time contained a large number of German expatriates, one of whom, Horst Liepolt, had discovered the music in 1944. On arriving in Melbourne, he quickly established a club for aficionados in a building normally used only on Saturdays as a Yugoslav nightclub.



*Adrian Rawlins reading poetry*

Early in 1960, Horst Liepolt asked me to create a Poetry & Jazz situation for Wednesday nights. It

opened on October 5 [1960]; the Mookie Hermann All Stars featured Syd Clayton on saxophone, Keith Stephens, vibraphone, who contributed some great original music to our efforts, and, I think, Bobbie Gebert on piano (though he may have joined us later when Keith Stephens dropped out), Mookie, bass, and Bob Pierce on drums.

The first night included two poems by Edith Sitwell, two short selections by co-reader Bob Cumming, himself a poet of impressive though quantitatively-limited stature (he read Blake's "Tyger" and some poems by his mentor Harry Hooton) and a most effective 16 bar blues setting by Keith for a poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, which I read.

The evening finished with my reading of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" — a poem which I then felt to be as significant to the second half of the twentieth century as "The Wasteland" is to the first half. Nothing has made me alter this opinion, 30 years later.

Everything went well on that slightly nervous night in 1960 until I read "with mother finally f.....d" at which moment I heard a great moan of anguish in a female voice arise from the back of the relatively large audience.

I should also mention that, due to a brilliant surrealist poster designed by Max Robinson, we had an abnormally large audience for the first two sessions. The second week, during the reading of "Howl", the same groans of horror arose and, at the end of the evening, I sought out the afflicted woman who apologized, saying she couldn't, just couldn't, bear the sound of *that word*, even though she understood its use in the poem was valid in terms of American life and culture.

The next week the cabaret hosted a private social which had been booked many months previously.

That night two members of the Vice Squad called to enquire about the 'obscene' poetry that had been reported. Horst lied to the effect that we were a group of university students who had hired the 'hall' for a couple of weeks and, as the officers could see, the place was now occupied by sensible, beer swilling revellers.

Poetry & jazz came to an end in August 1961... ■



# Tom Pickering's Jazz Journey

## By Peter Hicks

This unpublished article, on one of Tasmania's best known jazz pioneers Tom Pickering (1921–2001), was written circa 1963



**Tom Pickering's story and, indeed, the story of Tasmanian jazz began in 1935 when, as an inducement to pass his exams, Tom's father gave him a clarinet. Although this insignificant gesture will not be recorded in Tasmanian history many thousands of people have benefited from it and many more will continue to do so.**

Prior to this, Tom and three of his friends, Ian and Cedric Pearce and Rex Green were knocking out their own form of jazz on an improvised drum kit which consisted of a conglomeration of tins and boxes set up on a table. With the help of Tommy Dorsey's Clambake Seven or Bob Crosby's Bob Cats playing in the background the Pickering household was treated to what was surely the first attempt at playing jazz in Tasmania.

Ian then purchased a cornet for 7/6<sup>d</sup>. Cedric improved the drum kit and with Rex Green on piano the "Barrelhouse Four" was formed. Playing at house parties and an odd dance here and there the band continued until broken up by the war in 1939. During the war Tom spent some time in Melbourne and Sydney and this of course gave him an opportunity to sit in with other bands, notably Graeme Bell and

Frank Johnson, to meet other musicians and to gain knowledge and experience in the jazz field.

The end of hostilities saw the reformation of the "Barrelhouse Four" and with their added experience gained during sessions with Bell & Co. they became very popular in and around Hobart. The next step was to the first Australian Jazz Convention in Melbourne at Christmas 1946 and an article in the magazine "Tempo", February, 1947 serves best to convey the appreciation with which Tom and Co. were received by stating: "The Pearce-Pickering team smacked highly of Mezzrow-Ladnier at times but when the clarinet cut loose, either in his own group or with the Bells it provided one of the real thrills of the four days. Yes, Tom Pickering's fierce whining solos and also his terrific ensemble sense will forever be remembered by Melbourne's musicians and lovers of the real jazz".

Shortly after this however, the "Barrelhouse Four" broke up. Ian Pearce left to study at the Melbourne Conservatorium and to play trombone with Graeme Bell, and Rex Green was transferred to Shepparton in Victoria.

The arrival of piano-playing university student Keith Stackhouse started the ball rolling again in the form of a trio with Cedric Pearce on drums. In 1947, Col Wells, who had been playing with various dance bands came on the scene and added a powerful trumpet lead to the trio.

Tom must have had a good magnet, for shortly afterwards he was joined by trombonist, Benny Cuebas, Geoff Sweeney and bass player Ron Roberts. Ron also happened to be married to Kay Stavely who became one of Australia's finest jazz vocalists.

The stage was set and from there on Hobart, and in fact most of Tasmania, was to be treated to the "Good Time Jazz" that remains a trademark of Tom and his fellow musicians to this day.

Commencing with their own dance in a suburban hall in 1948 they soon moved to the 7HT theatrette in the centre of Hobart where they remained until 1956. During this period thousands of young people saw and heard the "Goodtimers" (as they were called) and, as the crowd was always upwards of 400, they must have appreciated the driving, free swinging Dixieland Jazz that they were treated to. While playing on Wednesday and Saturday nights at the 7HT theatrette (The Jazz House) the "Goodtimers" played



opposite a swing band at Hobart's City Hall. This dance was also very popular and no doubt contributed to the increasing popularity of the group.

During this period Tom led the "Goodtimers" to recording sessions on Ampersand and Swaggie, A.B.C. Swing Clubs, the distinction of being the first Australian Jazz Band to have their own radio spot on the A.B.C., and the further conventions.

At the Melbourne convention in 1953 they were one of the top groups, and Tom was awarded second prize in the Original Tunes Competition with his tune called "I'm Getting Jack of Jazz". This, one finds difficult to believe as he still continues to play in the same forceful manner on either clarinet or tenor sax.

In 1956 their Saturday night dance moved to the Town Hall where operations continued in the same vein until 1959 when Ian Pearce returned from overseas to take up the piano chair vacated by Keith Stackhouse and the leadership of the group now calling themselves the "Ian Pearce Sextet". In recent years Tom's appearances have been with this group and playing Ian's mainstream arrangement has given him an opportunity to give some of his own tunes an airing. However, it's the same Tom and the same sound and after a series of successful Casual Clubs the familiar sound can be heard coming from a suburban hotel on Saturday nights. Here one can sit and listen to Tom, Ian and drummer Max Sweeney putting it out as they have done since 1935.

Jazz music was only a sideline with Tom as his full time occupation is as a librarian at the State library. He has played with most of the older Australian jazz men and some visiting Americans, notably Billy Banks, with whom he recorded, Rex Stewart, Barney Bigard, Billy Kyle and Edward Hall. He has two teenage sons, both of whom show signs of following in his footsteps. He insists on rejecting the "Traditional" label and in fact any label (except perhaps "Mainstream") but he has obvious sympathies with the Wilson-Holiday small groups and some of the Chicagoans. He shouts out an occasional gruff vocal and can knock out a tune on guitar and recorder (shades of Ade.)

During his association with jazz, Tom has always been willing to help others with the same interests. Many musicians have received his advice and he is always prepared to assist in any way to further the interests of the music.

Charity concerts, T.V. and radio appearances are all part of his endeavours to further the increasing interest in jazz. From time to time he turns his hand to press articles. One of these which gives an indication of the way he felt about the present-day jazz scene ... appearing in the literary quarterly, "Quadrant" (September 1963).

Because of his ability and personality he is admired by all as a musician and a gentleman, and listening to his music makes one understand why Louis Armstrong, impressed when played a tape recording of the "Goodtimers", said, "This is really great". ■



*Tom Pickering with Roger Bell at the 32nd Jazz Convention in Hobart - 1977*

# Eric Myers' Album Review



I first heard pianist Aaron Blakey in November 2019, when I reviewed for the *Australian* the Sydney quartet led by alto saxophonist Michael Griffin.

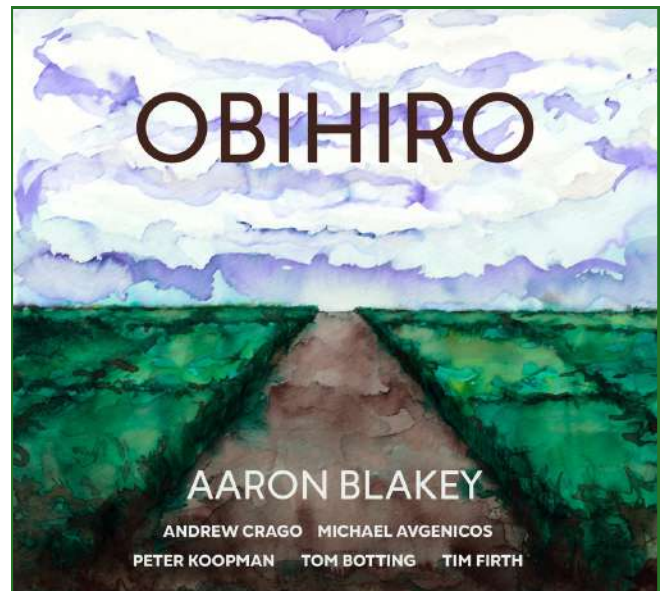
Even in that splendid group, Blakey was obviously a talent to watch. My review, entitled "Pub jazz springs to life in Sydney's King Cross" appeared in the *Australian* around that time. Subsequently I heard Blakey, again as a sideman, on Michael Walder's excellent 2021 album *Blues for Ray*. A piano trio album with Walder on double bass, and drummer Alex Hirlian, it also included horn players Simon Ferenci (trumpet) and Chris O'Dea (tenor saxophone) on some tracks. Once again, surrounded by excellent musicians, Blakey's brilliance was able to shine through.

In late 2022, in what would prove to be the last performance in Sydney of the alto saxophonist Andrew Speight – shortly before his suicide in December, 2022 – Blakey joined a jam session at Foundry 616 in the company of many leading Sydney musicians, and played a feature number on piano which was an extraordinary tour de force. Having been primed by these encounters, I was therefore expecting some highly impressive music when the album "Obihiro" arrived.

I was not disappointed. It's an outstanding album of contemporary hard-bop which continues a long tradition of New Zealand musicians moving across the ditch to Australia and enriching the local jazz scene. Blakey, now 38, arrived in Sydney in 2011, after establishing himself in New Zealand before moving to Japan for five years.

He is joined here by two Kiwis: Tom Botting (double bass) and Peter Koopman (guitar), plus Aussies Andrew Crago (alto sax), Michael Avgenicos (tenor sax) and Tim Firth (drums).

All play with considerable brilliance, on nine excellent Blakey compositions, which are inspired by a variety of life experiences. The title track "Obihiro" for example is a town in Japan where Blakey ran on country roads edged by rice fields. Blakey is such a mature pianist and composer that it's something of a surprise that this is only his second album as a leader. An uninhibited pianist, whose improvisations are overflowing with ideas, he is heard to great advantage on this outstanding album. ■



**Label:** Independent

**Personnel:**

Aaron Blakey (piano),  
Tom Botting (double bass),  
Peter Koopman (guitar),  
Andrew Crago (alto sax),  
Michael Avgenicos (tenor sax),  
Tim Firth (drums).

*Eric Myers was the inaugural jazz critic for the Sydney Morning Herald, 1980-1982, and jazz critic with the Australian, 1983-1987. He was publisher & editor of the Australian Jazz Magazine 1981-1986, and a government-funded Jazz Co-ordinator from 1983-2002. He returned to writing on jazz for the Australian in 2015. He has a website dedicated to documenting Australian jazz history at this link [www.ericmyersjazz.com](http://www.ericmyersjazz.com)*



The Australian Jazz Museum opened its doors on International Jazz Day eve, April 29th, with tours, goods for sale and a barbeque. Performances by six local bands were a highlight of this most successful day. Our thanks to all those who participated in the event.



Anita Harris

Barrie Boyes was the MC

Pippa Wilson



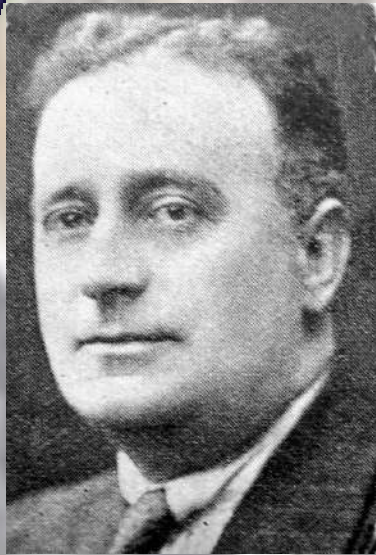
Graeme Bell's cousin Ian Rogers chats to AJM volunteers Mel and Dan

Blue Tango

Bayswater MP Jackson Taylor gives the day the thumbs up with Wantirna local Kerrie



# Reminiscing



Reginald A. A. Stoneham (1879–1942) was perhaps Australia's leading exponent of jazz and ragtime piano styles in the first decades of the 20th century, both as a composer and performer.

He wrote several jazz and ragtime titles that were published in the 1920s.

